





22

RURAL FELICITY;

OR, THE

H I S T O R Y

O F

TOMMY AND SALLY.

EMBELLISHED WITH CUTS.

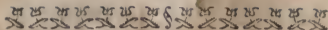
L O N D O N:

Printed for E. NEWBERY, the Corner
of St. Paul's Church Yard.

[Price One Penny.]

Ruth Gridley
Her Book





RURAL FELICITY.

IN one of those villages, which are situated at no great distance from the splendid metropolis of England, lived Tommy and Sally, of whom the former was twelve, and the latter ten years of age; but it was difficult to say which was the prettiest, or which was possessed of the sweetest and most affable temper.

Their parents cultivated a little farm, which they rented of a neighbouring gentleman, and, by excellent care and management derived from thence, though not the bril-

6 RURAL FELICITY.

liant luxuries of life, yet every thing that Nature requires, and which always satisfies those, who know how to be contented with the frugal and solid enjoyments of life.

It was Tommy's employment to attend his father in the fields, to drive the team, and assist in the cultivation of the lands; while Sally was busied, under the direction of her mother, in all kinds of domestic concerns, in feeding the poultry, or milking the cows. See how busy she is!



As soon as the business of the day was finished, they amused themselves, in summer time, with dancing on the green among their juvenile neighbours, or in some other innocent rural sports. In the winter evenings, when the days were

8 RURAL FELICITY.

short and cold, they read to their parents, or amused themselves with relating to each other, such diverting stories, as they had read and remembered.

It was in one of these winter evenings, that Tommy told his sister the following story to amuse her.

“ A certain king, being out with a hunting party, by chance lost his company, and got into the midst of a large wood. The king, who had been accustomed to be surrounded by courtiers, who always studied his wants, and flattered his passions, was now happy in meeting with a poor young shepherd. As the king was not dressed in robes of royalty, but in a country dress, the shepherd had no idea of his being a person superior to what he had seen in other men.

“ When

“ When the king asked him how far it was through the wood, and which was the nearest way to get out of it, the shepherd answered him in so sensible and decent a manner, that the king began to think he might be some great person, like himself, in disguise.

“ He accompanied the shepherd out of the wood, and accepted of his invitation to go and partake of a little refreshment at his cottage. The king had hitherto supposed, that there could be no such thing as happiness without riches and grandeur, and was there greatly astonished to see what mirth and merriment prevailed among the shepherds and shepherdesses wherever he passed.

“ On their arrival at the cottage, the king was struck with admiration at the neatness and simplicity which

appeared in all parts of it. It indeed was not ornamented with gold and silver, nor decorated with costly paintings, but every thing was adequate to the moderate wants of its inhabitants. The provisions he partook of were such as he had never before tasted ; because he never before knew what it was to be truly hungry. See how heartily he eats.

“ Have



“ Have you ever been at court, (said the king) and seen the splendour and magnificence which are there displayed ? ” — — “ I have not, (answered the shepherd) but I have heard enough of it, and that is to me sufficient. They tell me, that

every thing there wears a false face, that men weep when their hearts are rejoicing, and appear with cheerful faces, when their hearts are overwhelmed with sorrow. Truth is there hardly ever spoken, and he who can deceive, makes his fortune the soonest. Give me my rural felicity, and they may enjoy their wealth and grandeur without my envy."

"During all this time, the nobles and attendants were riding round the wood in pursuit of their royal master, without being able to hear the least tidings of him. At last, passing near the shepherd's cottage, they saw a horse standing at the door, which they instantly knew to be the king's. But how shall I express their astonishment when, on entering, they found the king seated at
an

an old table, and eating heartily of some coarse brown bread and a piece of fat bacon!

“Here is a peasant, (said the king to his noble followers, who by this time had filled the cottage) who prefers rural felicities to all the false parade and grandeur of a court. Contented in this homely but peaceful cottage, he despises the habitations of deluded kings, and considers gilded palaces as the abodes of anxiety, flattery, and deceit. I will, however, if possible, encrease his happiness in his own way.”

“The king afterwards purchased, not only the cottage the shepherd lived in, but also a great deal of the surrounding land, which he caused to be stocked with plenty of cattle of the best kind, as well as carts and farming utensils. All these
he

he made a present of to the shepherd to enjoy as long as he lived, and afterwards to go to his successors for ever”

When Tommy had finished his story, Sally very kindly thanked him for it. She could not help expressing her satisfaction at the honest simplicity of the shepherd, who preferred rural felicities to the possession of titles and riches; nor could she less admire the generosity of the king, and his condescension to listen to the language of a shepherd.

“ I remember, (said Sally) a story, which may serve as a companion to what you have just related. A certain powerful queen had one day disguised herself in a mean habit, and in that state rambled about the country, to see in what manner the young women passed their time, and whether,

whether, like young ladies of courts and cities, they yawned away their valuable days in indolence and idleness.

“ She was very well pleased to observe, how industrious all the young maidens in the country were, and how cheerfully they spent their time. Some were carrying their eggs to market, some looking after their fowls, and others milking the cows. But what attracted her attention most, was a little angel of a girl, who was standing at a farmhouse door, and working at the churn to make butter, as you here see.



“ The queen went up to her, and asked her many questions, all which she answered so readily and prettily, that she determined to take her with her to court, and give her a genteel education. She accordingly made herself known to Patty, (for that was

was the little maiden's name) who was greatly surpris'd to find herself conversing with a queen.

“ It was with no small reluctance that Patty quitted her cottage, and followed the queen to court. Here she was instructed in all the fine branches of needlework and embroidery; in reading, writing, and accounts; in drawing, dancing, and music. In short, every accomplishment that could be thought of was bestowed on Patty, on whom those instructions were not thrown away, as she had a lively turn of mind, and an admirable genius.

“ Her coarse stuff gown was now laid aside, and she paraded about in silks and muslins. Pomp and parade surrounded her on all sides, and she seem'd inclined to forget the humble station from which she was taken,

18 RURAL FELICITY.

taken, and the dangerous one to which she was advanced. See how differently she now looks to what she did when the queen found her at the cottage door.



“ Fine clothes, sumptuous living,
and a life of indolence and ease, are
too

too apt to make us forget ourselves, which is the sure road to unhappiness. All this finery and parade, at first, dazzled the eyes of Patty, who began to think no more of rural felicities; whole days and nights were spent in parties of pleasure, and music, dancing, and feasting, so rapidly succeeded each other, and frequently were all blended together, that she had not a moment to bestow on reflection.

“ However, a constant succession of any one thing, be what it will, seldom fails soon to disgust us. Patty began to have some moments of reflection in the intervals of her pleasures; and when she compared the tumultuous joys of the court with the more placid pastimes of the rural nymphs and swains, she soon found, that the exchange she had
made

made was by no means an addition to her happiness.

“ She found that every thing at court was covered with artifice and deceit, and that jealousy, envy, and hatred, were the principal inhabitants of courts and palaces. The older she grew, the more sensible she became of these truths, and frequently looked back on her infant days as the happiest period of her life.

“ She would frequently ask permission of the queen, to go and visit her native spot, when she never failed to weep at the entrance of that door, from whence the queen first took her. She advised all her relations and friends never to give up their rural felicities for the empty shew of greatness and grandeur, which, though the world generally
 envies.

envies the possessors of them; they were in fact to be pitied.

“ At last, however, the good old queen died, and left Patty a considerable fortune. As soon as her royal friend was buried, she determined to quit the court, and leave all its gaieties and anxieties to the great and foolish.

“ Patty’s family cottage being now gone much to decay, she ordered it to be pulled down, and built on that very spot, a neat but plain house, in which she spent the remainder of her days. While she lived at court, she was only the servant of a queen, but here she was a queen herself, at least she was considered as such by all the inhabitants of the neighbouring village, whom she made happy by her bounty.

“ She

“ She fed the hungry, clothed the naked, gave small fortunes to the country lasses in marriage, and supplied the young men with implements of husbandry. Need I tell you, my dear Tommy, that, after all this, her death was considered as a loss to all the surrounding villages, where the sweet sound of the taber and the pipe ceased to be heard for a long time, and instead thereof nothing but groans and lamentations prevailed. Those grass-plats were long untrodden, on which the shepherds and shepherdesses used to dance by the light of the moon, and the village bells, instead of ringing merrily as usual, kept up a perpetual knell. Now do not you think, that my Queen Patty would have made an excellent wife for your King?”

Tommy

Tommy was perfectly of his sister's opinion, and made not the least doubt, but that Patty was much happier in the midst of her rural amusements, than ever she was when surrounded with scenes of grandeur and royalty.

Sally then pulled out of her pocket this little picture,



and asked her brother, if he could tell her the history of it. Tommy, after looking at it some little time, told his sister he remembered the matter well, and would relate it to her in as few words as possible.

“ This is one of the many proofs that may be produced, my dear Sally, (said he) that there is no condition in human life that is perfectly free from care and trouble. The shepherd that you here see sitting by the side of the stream was named Collin, a youth of excellent parts, and most sincerely respected by every one who knew him.

“ While looking after his sheep he became acquainted with a shepherdess, whose name was Phebe. She was as lovely as Aurora, and as chaste as Diana. It was a long time before her modesty would suffer her

her to enter into conversation with Collin, who, at first, concealed himself behind a tree, or under the hawthorn hedge, while he made his pipe pour fourth the sweetest and most enchanting sounds. Then he would exert all the harmony of his voice, and sing out all the pangs that rejected lovers are said to feel.

“ Time, however, brought on more familiarity, and Phebe at length submitted to sit by the side of Collin, while he played on his pipe. To be short, they soon conceived a liking for each other, and had even pitched on the day, when the parson of the parish was to unite them for life. But, alas! Providence had decreed otherwise.

“ They were one day sitting on the grass, and gathering the wild flowers that sprung around them, in
order

order to chuse from them the colour of her ribbons for the nuptial day ; when suddenly the sun withdrew his beams, the clouds gathered, and a rumbling noise was heard in the element.

“ Collin began to be alarmed for the safety of his dear Phebe, and was rising in order to conduct her to a cavern in the rock for safety ; but, at that very moment, the skies seemed to open, a dreadful flame issued from it, which was instantly succeeded by a most terrible clap of thunder.

“ The affrighted Collin turned round to catch his Phebe in his arms, but, alas ! she lay prostrate on the ground : the lightning had struck her, and she was to speak no more. See her unhappy fate !

“ I shall



“ I shall not attempt to describe the horror and despair of poor Colin on this occasion. He attended her funeral, and wished to be buried in the grave with her, refusing to listen to every kind of consolation. He then returned to the fatal spot where

where his dear Phebe was killed, and there died, after having languished several days."

When Tommy had concluded his story, his sister took her handkerchief from her pocket, and wiped her eyes; for the tears stole down her cheek without her being able to conceal it. She thanked her brother for his kindness, and sincerely pitied the fate of poor Collin and his Phebe.

Tommy then drew out of his pocket this picture,



and shewed it to his sister, in order to divert her thoughts from the melancholy tale he had been telling: “ You here see, my dear Sally, (said he to his sister) a true representation of our last fair. My uncle James won the prize at cudgels, and my brother

brother William threw all the wrestlers.

“ The rich and polite came many miles in order to see the rural amusements at our fair, though they have neither courage nor dexterity sufficient to permit them to be any thing more than idle spectators. Were some of these visitors to get a broken head, they would be frightened out of their senses, and expresses would be sent to fetch all the surgeons in the neighbourhood.

“ A kick on the shin would be as terrible to them, as the loss of a leg or an arm to many of our rustic youths. Brought up in the lap of idleness and luxury, they content themselves with envying or admiring in others what they cannot attain themselves. They know not what hard labour is, they eat without an appetite,

appetite, go to bed without sleeping, and yawn and saunter away the greater part of their lives.

“What a happy reverse is the life of the rural swain! The lark welcomes his early approach in the fields, and the early dews refreshen his countenance. Hale, hearty, and robust, he cheerfully encounters the toils of the day, and returns to his meals with an appetite, which sets aside every want of luxurious cooks to make his food palatable.

“The toils of the day are succeeded by rural amusements, which consist of manly sports, and feats of activity. Away then with pomp and luxury, and leave me in the quiet possession of *Rural Felicity*.”

T H E E N D,

